

Cuepacs must adjust claims to RM2b, says Dr M

By Vijayan Menon

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he would leave it to Cuepacs to adjust its claims for a salary revision for civil servants as long as the adjustments were limited to the RM2 billion offer.

"I do not know what further adjustments can be made. If we increase one thing, we must decrease something else.

"I believe we have given a scheme which, to my opinion, is good. If they (Cuepacs) reject the offer, then they will not get anything. If adjustments can be made, we will accept but the limit is RM2 billion," Dr Mahathir said when asked by reporters whether any adjustments would be entertained by the Government on the RM2 billion offer.

Dr Mahathir said he had made it clear during his meeting with Cuepacs representatives yesterday the Government's stand.

"I explained to them the Government's position that we can't afford to give any more than the agreed sum of RM2 billion. This is not a small sum.

"With the additional RM1 billion for bonus payments, our 1996 Budget surplus of RM3.5 billion will be reduced to RM500 million. We have to allocate RM3 billion out of the RM3.5 billion surplus."

He was speaking after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Keris Motion Sdn Bhd and Measat

Broadcast Network Systems Sdn Bhd and the launching of Keris Motion Sdn Bhd's logo here today.

Asked on the reaction of Cuepacs representatives who met him yesterday, Dr Mahathir said they had sought a week to explain to their affiliates the Government's stand and to make a decision.

On when the payments would be made if Cuepacs agreed to the offer, Dr Mahathir said the Government was prepared to begin payments backdated to Jan 1 from now while the bonus would be paid at the end of the year.

Cuepacs president Mohamed Mat Jid led a 14-member delegation to meet Dr Mahathir over the wage claim yesterday. The meeting lasted more than an hour.

Mohamed had said that Cuepacs was not giving up hope and would discuss the matter at its congress council meeting on Friday. The council, its highest decision-making body, last met on Oct 15 to discuss the wage claim.

Cuepacs had sought the meeting with the Prime Minister to explain why it was asking for an additional RM1 billion. The Government made its RM2 billion offer to Cuepacs on Oct 6 through the Public Services Department, but Cuepacs said it was insufficient.

Meanwhile, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek said Cuepacs' stand in pushing for an extra RM1 billion did not reflect the wishes of the 848,000 Gov-

ernment employees.

Speaking after the launch of the Labour Department's Labour Education Programme here today, he said based on the feedback he has been getting, many Government employees were happy with the RM2 billion offer plus the bonus payments totalling RM1 billion.

"Many Government officials are saying the offer is very reasonable," he said, adding that Cuepacs has only 179,000 members or about 20 per cent of the Government workforce.

Lim said Cuepacs had been pushing for a better deal for the lower income group and now it has been given the flexibility to make adjustments within the RM2 billion offer.

The PSD has also told Cuepacs leaders that they can make the adjustments and come up with proposals.

Reiterating his call for Cuepacs to accept the offer, Lim said Cuepacs leaders had already met the Prime Minister as they had requested.

"The Prime Minister spent more than an hour briefing them on the Government position and listening to their problems. It is about time that they study the offer.

"Our Prime Minister is being very reasonable.

"It is because of him that Cuepacs is getting the salary revision payment to be backdated to Jan 1."